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ABSTRACT

The study of how subjects are or are not accepted for inclusion into the curriculum is an area which has largely been ignored but which offers opportunities for a new integration of historical, sociological, and educational approaches. Some of the areas open for such study include the structural and political factors influencing the making of curriculum, the negotiation of entry and status of the curriculum in schools, and how the curriculum was constructed and reconstructed. Internal and external processes involved in the making of curriculum are identified. The internal processes include invention of the ideas necessary for the creation of the subject and the development of coalitions to promote the subject as a discipline. External processes include the influence of constituencies outside the educational system on the evolution of academic disciplines and curriculum. Combining these internal and external processes allows for the development of an evolutionary model of the political processes involved. Stages in this process include the invention of a new subject, promotion of the subject by those interested in seeing it adopted, legalization or acceptance, and mythologization, the final stage in which a subject receives automatic acceptance. (IS)

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THE MAKING OF CURRICULUM

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In our studies of curriculum - certainly speaking of the English context - there has been a paucity of serious historical work. This is an important lacuna, in my view, both for our understanding of curriculum issues generally but also for the scrutiny and elaboration of curriculum theory.

A common sequence of theory to empirical study and back again was displayed following the new sociology of education movement in England in the 1960s. Here the curriculum was posited as an important issue for theorising and structural theories about the role of knowledge and the curriculum in social reproduction were developed. In sequence what then followed was a leap to detailed empirical, often ethnographic, work.

This then led to some reformulation of theory (an example would be the work of Paul Willis).

In this sequence the yawning gap should be obvious: little work was conducted on the process of _becoming curriculum_, on establishing high status school subjects and knowledge. What structural and political factors influenced the making of curriculum and the negotiation of entry and status of that curriculum in schools? How was the curriculum we study historically constructed and reconstructed? In Hobsbawn's term we need to study not only 'the invention of tradition'(1) but the ongoing maintenance and reproduction of that tradition in the form of that most basic and influential of social traditions, the curriculum. For as Rudolph has told us the curriculum 'is where we tell ourselves who we are'(2).

In this paper I shall have to assume a great deal for it is impossible to offer more than a flavour of the data. In doing this I am drawing on English work in curriculum history which is now emerging at a fairly steady pace. There are my own studies in _School Subjects and Curriculum Change_(3) and, forthcoming, _The Making of Curriculum_(4) together with a collection of studies by a range of scholars brought together in _Social Histories of the School Curriculum_(5). In

addition new work by Cooper[6], McCulloch, Layton and Jenkins[7] promises to further promote understanding of historical process.

But for the moment I must assume some of this work and provide what are little more than brief exemplars. The purpose however is clear: to urge a serious and broad-based move towards the development of curriculum histories. Some time ago C Wright Mills said that

> "the production of historians may be thought of as a great file indispensable to all social science"

and that

> "every social science - or better, every well-considered social study - requires historical scope and a full use of historical materials". (8)

To recapitulate, if we use these criteria it is plain that much of our curriculum study and theory is not "well considered", the great file indispensable to all social science has proved eminently dispensable.

Modes of historical study

In juxtaposing history not only with curriculum study but with curriculum theory also (and in wishing to give birth to a new child, curriculum history), there is an evident and basic problem. History is not first and foremost a theoretical mode of study. Above all

the concern is with particular historical situations which are in their nature unique. The process of explanation, generalisation and theorising is of necessity secondary to the pursuit of understanding at this level. Ricoeur puts it this way:

> "Explanation in history is not an end in itself: it serves to mediate historical understanding which is tied in turn to the narrativity of the historical text". (9)

Yet, accepting the primacy of the pursuit of understanding unique historical events and situations does not deny history its explanatory and theoretical potential. In this sense the Ricoeur quote is exact: there is a place for explanation, even if not pride of place. Moreover, establishing the <u>recurrence</u> of factors and events in a range of unique locations can help in discerning explantory frameworks, in testing and elaborating theory.

Curriculum historians need to ensure that their capacity to develop their 'great file indispensable to all social science' makes optimum connections with strategies for explanation and theory. The current debate over <u>realism</u> is an instructive example.

Roy Bhaskar states that realist explanations develop the distinction between observed regularities and those underlying 'mechanisms' which account for these regularities. Bhaskar discerns three levels of

reality: firstly 'mechanisms', causally efficacious processes, secondly 'events', those consequences of effects of mechanisms and thirdly 'experiences', subjectively perceived aspects of events(10).

Deriving from Bhaskar Olin Wright sees a realist process of explanation proceeding in this manner:

> "(1) regularities are identified (within a conceptual field which makes such observational regularities possible);
>
> "(2) a mechanism is postulated in the imagination: it is <u>invented</u> by the creative activity of the scientist acting on existing explanations and theories;
>
> "(3) the reality of the entities and processes postulated in the mechanism is then checked through empirical investigation (experiment, quasi-experiment or some other procedure)". (11)

Now clearly the sequence or posture to theory is starkly different for the historian. But at the same time it should be evident that historical study can be a useful mode for those investigations which may test or elaborate such theories. 'Regularities' or 'mechanisms' may then be identified or scrutinised as operant in particular historical locales: their status or existence may then be clarified, elaborated or modified.

Whilst historical studies may indeed discern 'regularities' these have to be consistently related to changing historical contexts. Regularities cannot be assumed as timeless and invariant. The historian starts, so to speak, from the other end. To give one example: in the next section certain explanatory frameworks are tentatively advanced, certain regularities if you will. But they are historically specific, they refer to a period of unusual stability in curriculum history when an integrated structure of examinations and associated resource allocations has been paramount. It has not always been so and given the current Government's intentions will most decidedly not stay so. Educational 'systems' themselves are subject to historical flux.

Structure and Mediation: Internal and External Factors

A theory of context with regard to subject teachers and communities essentially provides us with a 'cognitive map of curriculum influence' (or, more basically, the 'rules of the game'). In focussing on school subjects in this paper I am of course choosing only one aspect of curriculum for analysis; a wide range of other curriculum histories are potential and necessary. Essentially the rules discerned above are those

'internal' to the educational system. Since external factors are also of eminent importance broader theories of context will need to be elaborated if a general model of change is to be envisaged.

My previous studies were primarily internalistic and for this reason I begin by looking at internal strategies for curriculum mediation. A later section will tentatively deal with some external factors.

Processes of the Making of Curriculum

(a) Internal Affairs

1. "Invention"

1.1. In the model of subject evolution presented the early stages focus on pedagogic and utilitarian functions but plainly there are stages which precede the formation of subject groups. In this situation the 'ideas necessary for creation are normally available over a relatively prolonged period of time in several places"(12).

1.2. Westbury has conceptualised this initial stage as "invention". These inventions may originate with educators themselves trying out new ideas or practices; or they may sometimes be a result of pupil demands or of pupil resistance to existing forms, or they may arise in response to new 'climates of opinion'. They

may also come from 'inventions of the outside world' e.g. squared graph paper, books, micros(13).

1.3. Internally there is one overwhelming reason for the take-up of 'inventions' by subject groups. 'Inventions' normally exist in several places over a long period of time but "only a few of these potential beginnings lead to further growth":

> "such growth occurs where and when persons become interested in the new idea, not only as intellectual content but also as a potential means of establishing a new intellectual identity and particularly a new occupational role".* (14)

2. Subjects as "coalitions"

2.1. The process model developed by Bucher and Strauss for the study of professions provides valuable guidelines for those studying school subjects. Within a profession, they argue, are varied identities, values and interests. Hence professions are to be seen as "loose amalgamation of segments pursuing different objectives in different manners and more or less delicately held together under a common name at particular periods in history"(15). The most frequent

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* It is instructive to note that after this contention Ben-David and Collins conclude that: "the conditions under which such interest can be identified and used as a basis for eventually building a predictive theory".

conflicts arise over the gaining of institutional footholds, over recruitment and over external relations with clients and other institutions. At times when conflicts such as these become intense professional associations may be created or if already in existence become more strongly institutionalised.

3 Subject coalitions in evolution: internal curriculum change

3.1. In the subjects studied (further work is of course needed), a pattern of evolution can be discerned in the process of becoming a subject. Initially a subject is very loose amalgamation of sub-groups and even idiosyncratic versions, often focussed on pedagogic and utilitarian concerns.

3.2 A sub-group emerges arguing for the subject to become an academic discipline so as to be able to claim resources and status.

3.3. At the point of conflict between earlier sub-groups and the prostelytising 'academic' sub-group, a subject association is often formed. The association increasingly acts to unify sub-groups into a dominant coalition promoting academic status.

3.4 The dominant coalition calls for discipline status and for university departments to be set up to train

its disciplinary specialists (see MacKinder's manifesto). Some subjects (e.g. rural/environmental studies) are blocked at this point (university admissions policies play a role here).

3.5 For the successful subjects a final stage is the creation of a university discipline base. The subject is now defined increasingly by university scholars and it is to the structure of their material interests and resulting aspirational patterns that we must now look to explain curriculum change(e.g. new geography), and to explain any resultant tensions for the school subject.

(b) External Relations

As we have noted some of the 'inventions' which initiate internal curriculum change begin externally. But 'external relations' are of more importance than as initiators of change at this level. There is considerable evidence that for many subjects, especially the more 'applicable' subjects, the influence of industrial and commercial interests can be substantial. This, it should be noted, is not to argue a direct 'correspondence' thesis. Much of the work on the 'selective tradition' has focussed on textbooks. Anyon for example has persuasively shown how US Social Studies texts do omit

much of labour history[16]. Clearly textbooks are an important 'external' factor but they are dependent on internal take-up and can be supplemented internally. Ulitmately we are back with which models of internal curriculum can be sustained: in this act of sustenance external relations are vital.

The work of John Meyer is valuable in allowing us to conceptualise external relations[17]. His work, concerned with the US, has been modified by Reid with the UK system in mind. In this approach 'external forces and structures emerge not merely as sources of ideas, promptings, inducements and constraints, but as definers and carriers of the categories of content, role and activity in order to attract support and legitimation'. External relations then are seen less in terms of formal or conventional groups such as parents, employers, trade unions and universities, but in terms of more broadly conceived '<u>publics</u>'or '<u>constituencies</u>' which include all these people but go more widely to include scholars, politicians, administrators and others.

> "These interested publics which pay for and support education hand over its work to the professionals in only a limited and unexpected sense. For while it may appear that the professionals have power to determine what is taught (at school, district or national level,

> depending on the country in question) their scope is limited by the fact that only the forms and activities which have significance for external publics can, in the long run, survive. (18)

In winning the support of the crucial 'publics' or 'constituencies' suitable categories or rhetorics need to be defined. Reid has painstakingly constructed the evolution of one such category, the 'sixth form', and the associated evolution of the supporting constituency. Reid claims that we have to take the logic of these categories seriously and accept that 'within the terms of such logic, successful rhetorics <u>are</u> realities'. Though teachers and administrators

> "have to be careful that disfunctions between practice and belief do not escalate to the point where credibility collapses, nonetheless it remains true that what is most important for the success of school subjects is not the delivery of 'goods' which can be publicly evaluated, but the development and maintenance of legimating rhetorics which provide automatic support for correctly labelled activity'.

Hence Reid concludes:

> "The choice of appropriate labels and the association of them in the public mind with plausible rhetorics of justification can be seen as the core mission of those who work to advance or defend the subjects of the curriculum". (19)

The political process of curriculum change

The internal affairs and external relations of curriculum change point to a socio-historical or more specifically a political process at work. Placing the internal and external together leads to an evolutionary or historical model of political action which mediates aspects of the structure of the educational system. Hence school subjects would be seen as progressing through a number of stages.

1. Invention: Invention may come about from the activities or ideas of educators; sometimes as a response to 'climates of opinion', external initiators or pupil demands or resistance:

> "The ideas necessary for creation. . . are usually available over a relatively prolonged period of time in several places. Only a few of these inventions will lead to further action". (20)

2. Promotion, or 'agit prop' by educator groups internal to the educational system. Inventions will be taken up "where and when persons become interested in the new idea, not only as intellectual content but also as a means of establishing a new intellectual identity and particularly a new occupational role."

Hence subjects with low status, poor career patterns and even with actual survival problems may

readily embrace and promote new inventions such as environmental studies. Conversely high-status subjects may ignore quite major opportunities as they are already satisfactorily resourced and provide existing desirable careers. The response of science groups to 'technology' or (quite possibly) contemporary Maths groups to 'computer studies' are cases in point.

Promotion of invention arises from a perception of the possibility of basic improvements in occupational role and status.

3. Legalisation: The promotion of new inventions if successful leads to the establishment of new 'categories' or 'subjects'. Whilst promotion is initially primarily internally generated it has to develop external relations with sustaining 'constituencies'. This will be a major stage in ensuring that new categories or subjects are fully accepted, established and institutionalised. And further that having been established they can be sustained and supported over time.

Legalisation is associated with the development and maintenance of those legitimating rhetorics which provide automatic support for correctly labelled activity.

4. Mythologisation: Once automatic support has been achieved for a subject or category a fairly wide range of activities can be undertaken. The limits are any activities which threaten the legitimating rhetoric and hence constituency support.

The subject at this point is mythological. It represents essentially a licence that has been granted, (or perhaps a 'patent' or 'monopoly rights'), with the full force of the law and establishment behind it.

Conclusion

The specificity and nature of history leave us with a dual challenge in conducting future curriculum histories. Firstly, where possible, they must pursue the gradual and continuous nature of curriculum change (certainly in systems as decentralised as ours) so that connections can be developed with contemporary situations; this argues against too rigidly 'periodised' histories. Secondly, they must aspire not only to extend our range of data but to contribute to the examination, reformulation and elaboration of hypotheses and theories, thereby offering the potential for transforming our accounts.

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(I am indebted to Bill Reid for drawing my attention to Meyer and for his collaboration over a number of years)

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